

November 2015

## Features

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Abby Dodge

Over the past several months, the Cochise County Council for CASA, Inc. (CCCCI) has made a couple changes to their policies regarding reimbursement. I wanted to make sure that everyone is aware of these changes so that everyone understands exactly what CCCCCI can do for both the dependent children in Cochise County and the CASA volunteers who support these children.

The first change, which occurred earlier this year, opened up the financial assistance from CCCCCI to any child who is **eligible** for the

## Coordinator's Comments

CASA Program. Previously, the CCCCCI funding was limited to those children who had an assigned CASA. As a board, CCCCCI realized that children without assigned CASAs have the same needs of those with assigned CASAs and reworded their policy statement to allow for financial support for any child eligible for the CASA Program. DCS caseworkers can now contact me when they recognize a particular need that one of their children has, and I present the need to CCCCCI for approval. When a child is removed from his home, it takes several weeks for a clothing allowance to be approved and issued. These children often come with little to no additional clothing. When placed in a kinship placement, the kinship placement may not have been financially prepared to support additional children in the home. Because of CCCCCI, Lisette and I have had the opportunity to shop for clothing and personal items to ensure the children have what they need until the clothing allowance is implemented. This is just one example of how CCCCCI has been meeting the needs of the dependent children throughout Cochise County.

The other change that I wanted to make sure everyone was aware of is a change to the

volunteer mileage reimbursement policy. The policy now states, "Volunteer mileage will be reimbursed for extraordinary events beyond trips to court."

CCCCI's mileage reimbursement program is meant to assist CASAs with the expenses of mileage that occur outside of a CASA's normal duties/responsibilities. For example, if you are asked to take a case that is outside of the area in which you live, your case-related mileage would qualify for reimbursement. In addition, if the child you are assigned to changes placement to somewhere outside of the area in which you live, your case-related mileage would then qualify for reimbursement. Or, if you were taking your child outside of the area in which you live for an appointment or activity, that mileage would also qualify. If you are wondering if a particular trip would qualify for reimbursement, call the CASA office. We will be glad to discuss it with you.

CCCCI will not be reimbursing CASAs for mileage to/from court, as it is one of the key duties of a CASA. If you find that you have court more frequently than usual, if it seems like you are traveling to the courthouse

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# Coordinator's Comments [Continued]

excessively during a month, or if it is causing you a financial hardship, please let me know. The wording of the policy allows exceptions to be made pending extenuating circumstances.

CCCCI will also not be reimbursing CASAs for mileage to/from the CASA office. Although Secure Upload is not the easiest program to work with, it does allow CASAs to submit documents to our office in a secure manner. If you are having issues with the program, please let myself or Lisette know and we will do everything that we can to get you up and running. Contact logs, court reports, and any other case-related correspondence with identifying information should be submitted via Secure Upload. Remember, Secure Upload does not work using Safari, but it does work with Internet Explorer and Firefox. Also, please be sure to save in the Microsoft 97-2003 format (.doc, .xls, etc.) prior to uploading it, as Secure Upload will not accept the newer versions of Microsoft Office.

If you are not comfortable using Secure Upload, there are other options. You can bring paperwork to any of the Juvenile Probation Offices throughout Cochise

County. Simply place the document into an envelope, address it to ATTN: CASA, and turn it in at the front desk of the nearest Juvenile Probation Office. There are Juvenile Probation Offices in Douglas, Sierra Vista, Benson, and Willcox. I can always meet you at one of the other Juvenile Probation Office locations if you would like to deliver something in person; just let me know and we can set up a time for that. Otherwise, you can always mail the documents to us or send them by fax to 520-432-7247.

Any volunteer-related mileage that doesn't qualify for reimbursement through CCCCCI can be reported on your individual income tax return as a deduction under charitable contributions. At the end of the year, you can contact the CASA office and request a statement of your mileage for the entire year, according to what was reported on your contact logs. However, we will only be able to provide you with the total, we won't be able to differentiate if any of that mileage was reimbursed by CCCCCI; if you do receive a mileage reimbursement please keep track of how many miles you had reimbursed.

If you are submitting for mileage reimbursement, remember to be specific and

accurate in reporting the mileage you traveled. In order for CCCCCI to account for the money that they are reimbursing, it is necessary for them to receive accurate information. I will be distributing a new mileage reimbursement form to all of you for your use, to ensure that CCCCCI has the information they need for their records.

Neither CCCCCI nor I want this policy change to have a negative impact on anyone's ability to advocate for his or her assigned children. If at any point, something comes up that makes you need mileage reimbursement outside of what the policy normally allows, please let me know and I will bring that need to CCCCCI for approval.

CCCCI offers this mileage reimbursement policy as a way to thank all of you for the extra work that you do above and beyond what is expected of you as a CASA. Your tireless efforts are not going unnoticed. Keep up the hard work!



November 2015						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 <u>James</u> : Court Report Due for AW/BW.	3	4	5	6	7 Book Lovers Day
8	9 Chaos Never Dies Day	10 <u>Mary Kay</u> : Court Report due for DT only.	11  County Offices Closed	12	13 World Kindness Day	14 World Diabetes Day
15 Clean Your Refrigerator Day	16	17 Homemade Bread Day	18 <u>Mary B</u> : Court Report due for HP. <u>Melissa</u> : Court Report due for MKC only.	19 Have A Bad Day <u>Day</u>	20	21 Lin W. 
22 Go For A Ride Day	23	24	25 <u>Mary B</u> : Court Report due for CM. <u>Lynn V</u> : Court Report due for KW.	26  Thanksgiving County Offices Closed	27	28
29	30 <u>Ned</u> : Court Report due for CR.					

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support

## Kudos to Abby

by Mary Jacobs, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Kudos to Abby Dodge for the great job she did with the court report writing training recently! As it so happened, I was due to write my next report the following week. While I have submitted a number of reports over the last two years as a CASA, I never had the opportunity to attend a training. Admittedly, I was not thrilled with spending six hours on a Saturday in this training, but it was interesting, useful and definitely worth my time.

I consider myself a very good writer, having written many complex reports in my city management career. But I used the resources provided through the training to not only improve my document, but also more quickly determine what to put in each of the sections.

If you haven't had the opportunity to work the training into your schedule yet, or it's been awhile and you would benefit from a refresher, I highly encourage you to make time the next time Abby offers it.

Thanks, Abby!

## From the CASA Office



*A big thank you to everyone for  
helping us reach...*

*87% compliance with our  
training requirement for 2015*

*(compared to 61% at the end of  
2014)!*





## Cochise County Council for CASA

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure that educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

***If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!***

Call your CASA Coordinator  
at 432-7521 **OR**

Send an email to  
[Adodge@courts.az.gov](mailto:Adodge@courts.az.gov)

## Manny Valenzuela

Manny has been with CASA of Cochise County since 2006. Most recently, he was serving as co-CASA alongside Jim and Carol Huddleston. When the Huddlestons had to leave the program earlier this year, Manny did not hesitate to continue as Primary CASA on the case. Manny committed to me that he would be more consistent with his contact logs and with completing his annual training requirements – and he is not letting me down. Through the month of September, I have seen Manny become increasingly more active with his CASA child. He has stepped up and taken the role that the young man needed him to take. Manny has been proactive in researching ways to get his young man's needs met – he fixed the young man's bicycle and is planning to teach the young man the basics of maintenance so that he can continue to take care of his belongings. Manny has taken a very active role in all aspects of this young man's life, and it has not gone unnoticed.

In addition, earlier this year, I had received a request for someone to act as co-CASA for a younger child who was being placed in Douglas (who had a CASA in Pinal County – so they just needed someone to do monthly check-ins with the child and report

## volunteer of the Month!

### September 2015



back to the Primary CASA). Manny graciously accepted that responsibility. Although it was short-lived due to reunification occurring sooner than anticipated, both I and the coordinator from Pinal County were impressed with Manny's willingness to assist when needed.

Thank you, Manny, and keep up the great work!

# Letter to the CASA Council

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Deb De Rosa and I worked together on the Haunted House project to celebrate Halloween. Since I know she is on the CASA Council, I told her how much I appreciate the support CASAs get from the council. When one of our CASA kids needs something he/she cannot get anywhere else, we can ask the CASA Council to help. When one of our children gets that special something, it is huge. We all can remember the happiness we felt when special wishes and requests came true. This ah-ha! feeling hasn't changed over the years, but this time it is not the family or relatives making it possible for these wonderful things to happen. It is your support, and the donations you get from our community that brighten our children's lives. The possibilities are endless, depending on the needs of the child.

Here are some of the things the council has provided for my children.

1. Half the cost of a psychological evaluation

2. Two prom dresses
3. Ingredients for a meal to be cooked by the CASA kid
4. "Sweet 16" dinner
5. Uniforms for sports and work
6. Shoes for sports and work
7. Robotics classes
8. Summer camp
9. The entire collection of poems written by a prisoner  

This collection went from placement to placement and was one of the few things my girl took when she ran away.
10. A collection of books from Bookman's to start my boy's personal library
11. Guitar lessons
12. A bedspread
13. Summer camp
14. Two computers
15. Two bikes
16. Clothes and shoes for school and everyday
17. Movies, special treats, birthday cakes, an occasional lunch or dinner

All the things on this list have special meaning for the child. Not only does the child enjoy the item, but he/she has tangible evidence that ***someone cares and he will always be able to call up the positive memory of a time when someone cared.***

I salute the work of the CASA Council. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our children.

# A CASA Wearing Other Hats

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

I asked Julia McCaa to tell me what she has been doing lately. She said she is between cases but is active. She is always busy with her church, and she shared two of the things she is currently involved in.

Her church is active in working with young people every Tuesday night at "The Dream Center." Children from anywhere are welcome to get help with school work and related activities. Volunteers tutor the children, and Ft. Huachuca provides many of these volunteers. Soldiers and engineers from post are especially active.

One child had all Fs and a female soldier worked 5 days a week with the child to help the child catch up in school. She is still actively working with the child. The tutor picks the child up and brings him/her to the center. In addition to being tutored, a meal is provided, and the child gets to spend time in a positive environment with caring, dedicated volunteers.

Julia shared with me that she has been selected as one of 150 women from The First

Church of God in Christ to be honored at their annual conference in Saint Louis. 70,000-80,000 people from all over the world attend this conference. The awards are given at a banquet. The COGIC (Church of God in Christ) Award will be presented to the 150 influential woman who are chosen from the entire worldwide membership. Julia is thrilled to be one of these women.

I have known for many years that Julia is very active in her church and is a leader in the community. As a CASA she has nurtured and advocated tirelessly for the children she has represented. Julia devotes her whole life to helping others.

Julia is a true humanitarian.



## Support Group Meeting

**The 2nd Thursday of each month**

**10:00am-12:00 noon!!!**

**November 12th Meeting:**

Home of Lynn Vanderdasson

5776 E. Perry Lane  
Hereford, AZ 85615

**Come join us!**



# Mentoring

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

For the past 15 years, I have been passionately involved with being a CASA. One of the things I have enjoyed the most over the years is being a mentor. I just love seeing a new CASA dive into a case and read every line of the files to learn about the child they will advocate for until the case is dismissed. To watch the CASA figure out what needs to be done in order to achieve the best outcome for this case is an awesome experience. I have been proud of all the many achievements of all the CASAs, but my mentees' successes are special, not because of anything I have done, but because they have made a difference in the lives of so many children, and I got to watch them do this.

Friday night at the Halloween Haunted House I learned that one of my mentees is now a mentor. I was working side-by-side with Cheryl Tomlinson, and she happened to mention that her mentor is Lynn Vanderdasson. Cheryl told me what a wonderful mentor Lynn is and how much

confidence it gives her to be working with Lynn. Wow and double wow!!!!

## **Fellow CASAs--it doesn't get any better than that!**

The CASAs today are so busy with families, jobs, and sometimes school, yet they still volunteer to make a difference in the life of a child. There was a mentor program when I joined CASA, and I still remember the things my mentor taught me. The bond that is formed by working closely with another person adds a whole new dimension to our volunteer program. We become connected and that connection strengthens every single one of us. Abby and Lissete are there for all of us, but I hope each of you has a connection with at least one other CASA. It will greatly enrich your CASA experience.



Thanks to the CASA family for the kind wishes after my recent back and heart surgeries. The card lifted my spirits and let me know that there is a special group of people who care.

Bud



## Walk on the Wild Side...Writing an Addendum

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Because we work with children, things can change rapidly, and sometimes our carefully written court reports (complete in every detail and turned in on time) just won't cut it because everything has changed.

Sometimes it will work very nicely to explain the changes in court, but sometimes it just won't do. When this happens, I ask Abby if I should write an addendum. Abby and Lisette, bless them both, can get an addendum proofed and delivered to the judge in a day.

A recent case of mine changed so drastically that I had already written two very different reports (the first hadn't gone out when I wrote a second report). Abby had sent in the second report when it became clear the situation had changed once again and an addendum was necessary. I am absolutely positive that the addendum was necessary because I asked Abby, and she told me it was.

I wrote a narrative to explain to the judge what had happened since I submitted my report. I wrote and wrote and hastily proofed the results. I did remember all the advice

about proofing and taking a break and proofing and taking a break, but court was in two days. I had to write my addendum with an eye on the clock. My thoughts raced along and my fingers flew. I finally finished, proofed it, and sent it off. I was proud of my dedication and my speed.

Unfortunately for my ego, I had occasion to re-read my final efforts several days later. My addendum was riddled with errors. On a positive note, I did have an addendum in time for court. Another positive note – Abby and Lisette cleaned up my errors.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Conclusion:** I am not a person who proofs a finished product very well, and I need to take Abby's advice to proof and rest, proof and rest, and proof and rest. In this case, I had no window of time to polish my efforts. I had an hour to get it done. I met my deadline, and Abby and Lisette took care of the rest. Bless you, dear ladies; it is great being part of such an awesome team.



National Adoption Day will be celebrated locally with

### *Cochise County Adoption Day*

Ceremony & Celebration

Friday, November 20

9:00am in Division VI

Cochise County Superior Courthouse

100 Quality Hill

Bisbee, AZ 85603

**All past adoptive children and parents are invited!**

Also help celebrate some new adoptions!  
Reception with cake & punch to follow.

Organizer:

The Honorable Terry Bannon

520-432-8520

[tbannon@courts.az.gov](mailto:tbannon@courts.az.gov)

Submitted by **Zanetta Boughan**,  
Cochise County CASA Volunteer

# Haunted House

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Friday was the first night the haunted house was open. Every year the Fraternal Order of Police runs this event. CASA, The Boys and Girls Club, NAMI, San Pedro Kiwanis, Just Kids Inc, and Fry Fire District all have volunteers running the various rooms and booths. CASA runs the refreshment stand.

There was an orientation for all the volunteers. Everyone gathered and listened attentively to the rules. One rule that was emphasized was, "No one is to take off his/her mask at any time." We were to stay in character and not destroy our image by becoming human. I kept my mask on till I got home.

We had a great crew, Debbie De Rosa (from the CASA board), Cheryl Tomlinson, a brand new CASA, and Pam Collins who arrived two and a half hours early for her shift.

Debbie was the overall boss because she has done this many times before. She was manning the cotton candy machine. It is a delicate process to spin the candy, and if it

gets too cold in the room, the cotton candy sticks. Deb was a seasoned pro. Her wrist action whirling and twirling the cones was worthy of a ballet performance. The cones (750 of them) were all made by Emma Lee De Rosa, who is on the CASA council, was a CASA for many years, and works tirelessly for the good of the community. Every time I took a break, I admired Deb's finesse in dealing with the delicate strands of candy and chuckled to see her devil's horns bobbing and her tail swinging as she swooped around the cotton candy machine.

By the end of our shift we were all great buddies. Pam filled the cups with soft drink and ice, Cheryl put the candy into baggies, and I filled the popcorn sacks. Pam also coordinated the dispensing of goodies. Popcorn, drinks, candy, and cotton candy demand a specific rhythm to insure the smooth transition of all four items from booth to kid or parent.

It was so much fun working with three such

interesting, enthusiastic volunteers. Deb and I got to talking about all the wonderful things the CASA council does for kids. She told me the council appreciates hearing about their work. I know every CASA who has used the CASA council to help their child knows that the council truly does make a difference in the life of a child.

I get a bang out of helping others, but I didn't expect to get such a rush of satisfaction from filling popcorn bags. I have certainly taken on bigger challenges, but there is a special warm glow that comes from being part of a group where every single person is there with the sole purpose of helping kids to have fun. I went home feeling very glad I went and thrilled that I did my part to give the children of Sierra Vista a lasting memory of this Halloween.





# 2015 Annual Haunted House!



Photo courtesy Cochise Co Sheriff's Office



Treats at the Snack Wagon to calm nerves after a trip through the *haunted house!*



Dodge Legos come in all sizes



The Borbon girls: Dare Devil & Batman-gal!

# More Haunted House Photos!



CCCC volunteer Emma Lee DeRosa



Rep Dave Stevens



CASA volunteer Bekki Ray



CASA volunteer Ned Letto



Ghouls have a sweet tooth, too!



Adriana DoPadre



Adriana's dad? Maybe not!



# Still More Haunted House Photos!



CASA Coordinator Abby Dodge



CCCC's Emma Lee DeRosa  
CASA Volunteer Kathy Shaughnessy



Joe DoPadre, CASA volunteer Mary Jacobs, Sheriff Mark Dannels



Pam Collins for Just Kids, Inc



CASA Volunteer Jim LeClair



Brought to you by:  
Huachuca Lodge #28 Fraternal Order of Police, Boys & Girls Club of SV,  
CASA, NAMI, San Pedro Kiwanis, Just Kids Inc, Fry Fire District



# From the Manual

## Substance Abuse

### Overview

#### **THE PROBLEM**

Substance abuse is frequently cited as one of the top 2 problems challenging families reported to child welfare agencies for child maltreatment (the other is poverty).

- Substance abuse is a factor in 75% of foster placements (*Prevention Partnership International, 2008*).
- Substance abuse is a factor in over 70% of maltreatment reports, and children of substance abusers are 4 times more likely to be neglected than children of non-abusers (*American Humane Association, 2013*).

#### **DEFINITIONS**

Psychoactive substances, whether legal (i.e., alcohol), or illegal, impact and alter moods, emotions, thought processes, and behavior. These substances are classified as stimulants, depressants, opioids and morphine derivatives, cannabinoids, dissociative anesthetics, or hallucinogens based on the effects they have on the people who take them.

Substance abuse occurs when a person displays behavior harmful to self or others as a result of using the substance. This can happen with only one instance of use, but it generally builds over time, eventually leading to addiction. Addiction, also called chemical dependency, involves the following:

- Loss of control over the use of the substance
- Continued use despite adverse consequences
- Development of increasing tolerance to the substance
- Withdrawal symptoms when the drug use is reduced or stopped

#### **CAUSES**

There are different theories about how abuse/addiction starts and what causes substance abuse/dependency. According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, substance-related disorders are biopsychosocial, meaning they are caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors.

It is important to remember that people suffering from abuse/addiction are not choosing to be in the situation they are in. Try to see those who are addicted as separate from their disease. In other words, they should be seen as “sick and trying to get well,” not as “bad people who need to improve themselves.” This will help you to

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# From the Manual

(Continued)

remember to be compassionate and nonjudgmental in your approach.

## **TREATMENT**

The field of addiction treatment recognizes an individual's entire life situation. Treatment should be tailored to the needs of the individual and guided by an individualized treatment plan based on a comprehensive assessment of the affected person, as well as his/her family. Treatment can include a range of services depending on the severity of the addiction, from a basic referral to 12-step programs to outpatient counseling, intensive outpatient/day-treatment programs, and inpatient/residential programs.

Treatment programs use a number of methods, including assessment; individual, group, and family counseling; educational sessions; aftercare/continuing-care services; and referral to 12-step or Rational Recovery support groups. Recovery is a process—and relapse is part of the disease of addiction.

The process of recovery includes holding substance abusers accountable for what they do while using. While it is important to act in an empathetic manner toward people with addictions, they must be held accountable for their actions. For example, a mother who is successfully participating in treatment may have to deal with her children being temporarily taken from her because of how poorly she cared for them when using. In most cases, successful recovery efforts can be rewarded.

## **IMPACT ON CHILDREN**

Maltreated children of substance-abusing parents are more likely to have poorer physical, intellectual, social, and emotional outcomes and are at greater risk of developing substance abuse problems themselves. *Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2003*

It is helpful to remember that children of parents with abuse/addiction problems still love their parents, even though the parents may have abused or neglected them. However, the CASA volunteer must always consider the impact that substance abuse has on children.

### **The Effects of Substance Abuse on Parenting**

It is important to remember that when a parent is involved with drugs or alcohol to a degree that interferes with his/her ability to parent effectively, a child may suffer in a number of ways:

- A parent may be emotionally and physically unavailable to the child.
- A parent's mental functioning, judgment, inhibitions, and/or protective capacity may be seriously impaired by alcohol or drug use, placing the child at increased risk of all forms of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse.
- A substance-abusing parent may "disappear" for hours or days, leaving the child alone or with someone unable to meet the child's basic needs.

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# From the Manual (Continued)

- A parent may spend the family's income on alcohol and/or other drugs, depriving the child of adequate food, clothing, housing, and healthcare.
- The resulting lack of resources often leads to unstable housing, which results in frequent school changes, loss of friends and belongings, and an inability to maintain important support systems (churches, sports teams, neighbors).
- A child's health and safety may be seriously jeopardized by criminal activity associated with the use, manufacture, and distribution of illicit drugs in the home.
- Eventually, a parent's substance abuse may lead to criminal behavior and periods of incarceration, depriving the child of parental care.
- Exposure to parental abuse of alcohol and other drugs, along with a lack of stability and appropriate role models, may contribute to the child's substance abuse.
- Prenatal exposure to alcohol or other drugs may impact a child's development.

## The Effects of Substance Abuse on the Child's Experience

From a child's perspective, a parent's substance abuse is usually characterized by the following:

- **Broken Promises**—Parents may break their promises to go somewhere with the family, do something with the children, not drink that day, or not get high on some occasion. The children grow up thinking they are not loved or important

- enough for their parents to keep their promises.
- **Inconsistency & Unpredictability**—Rules and limits may seem to change constantly, and parents may be loving one moment and abusive the next.
- **Shame & Humiliation**—Alcohol or drugs may take over and suddenly turn an otherwise lovely parent into a loathsome embarrassment.
- **Tension & Fear**—Because the children of substance-abusing parents never know what will happen next, they typically feel unsafe at home, the environment in which they should feel most protected.
- **Paralyzing Guilt & an Unwarranted Sense of Responsibility**—Many children think they cause their parents' behavior. Part of the disease is to blame someone else for it, and the children grow up thinking that if they were better students, more obedient, neater, more reliable, or nicer to their siblings, their parents would not use alcohol/drugs.
- **Anger & Hurt**—Children may feel neglected, mistreated, and less important in their parents' lives than the alcohol or drugs. They grow up with a profound sense of abandonment.
- **Loneliness & Isolation**—Because the family denies or hides the problem and often will not even discuss it among themselves, the children, with no one to talk to about the most important thing in their lives, think they are the only ones with this problem.
- **Lying as a Way of Life**—Children may feel they have to constantly cover for the failure of the parent, or account for his/her deviant behavior.

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# From the Manual (Continued)

- **Feeling Responsible**—Often children feel that it is their job to organize and run the home and care for younger siblings.
- **Feeling Obligated**—Children feel they must hide the problem from authorities in order to protect the parent.

*Adapted from When Your Parent Drinks Too Much: A Book for Teenagers, Eric Ryerson, New York: Facts on File, 1985.*

Children in substance-abusing families need help to address these issues and begin to heal their wounds. CASA volunteers can advocate for thorough assessment and treatment by a provider who has expertise in working with substance abuse issues.

## What A CASA Volunteer Can Do

Educate yourself about the power of addiction and about resources such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Rational Recovery, Al-Anon, Alateen, and Nar-Anon. Support those family members who are willing to deal with the substance abuse problem, even if the person with the substance dependence is not.

Services for which you might advocate include:

- Thorough assessment with recommendations for treatment.
- Substance abuse treatment services (especially programs where the child can be with the parent, if appropriate).
- Home-based services to build family skills.

- Relocation out of an environment where drug or alcohol use is pervasive.
- Financial assistance and childcare while parents are in treatment.
- Support services such as SSI (Supplemental Security Income), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), food stamps, job training, and child support.
- When a child is in foster care, frequent visitation in a homelike atmosphere or a natural setting such as a park.

Assistance for the parent seeking to flee a domestic violence perpetrator—for example, obtaining a protective order, securing alternative housing, and taking other necessary steps (substance abusing domestic violence victims are more likely to remain sober away from the abuser).





# SACAC

## **The Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center**

Sometimes, despite everyone's intentions, bad things happen to good people. Sometimes, even after children have been removed from abusive homes and despite all checks and balances, they may suffer additional abuse within the system. When this occurs, a CASA child may have to endure interviews with law enforcement or other agencies, to include the potential of having to meet with a professional forensic interviewer outside the realm of the training in law enforcement.

The Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center, located at 2329 East Ajo Way in Tucson, is the only place at present in Southern Arizona where a child can receive this type of interdisciplinary support, which may be critical in acquiring the facts related to instances of sexual child abuse without further traumatizing the child. The Children's Advocacy Center is a "safe and child-sensitive place where child victims of abuse undergo the initial steps of an investigation and begin to heal ... these children have suffered sexual molestation, physical assault or extreme neglect."

The center was designed specifically to enhance collaboration and

coordination between agencies and prevent the bureaucracy that can sometimes leave a victim feeling as though they are a victim again. In the past, children were often interviewed multiple times about their victimization; evidence was often collected and injuries photographed in emergency rooms by medical professionals who may not have been accustomed to working with child victims. This disassociated network often impacted the ability of law enforcement to pursue criminal justice cases associated with this type of abuse.

In 1995, Tucson agencies engaged in child abuse cases conducted a holistic review to try to define a way ahead in providing the best support for these most vulnerable victims. They determined that there were five major issues occurring in the system:

- Excessive interviews with child victims;
- Inadequate development of physical evidence;
- Incomplete investigation;
- Lack of communication and coordination among agencies charged with responding to child abuse reports; and,
- Inadequate immediate and long-term services for children and their non-offending family members.

As a result, the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center was established in 1996. This was part of the results of the Pima County Protocols for the Multi-disciplinary Investigation of Child abuse, which are recognized by professionals as the "best practices" for child abuse investigation. They offer clinical services as well as education and outreach programs.

When a child has endured this form of abuse, they often will not disclose the nature of the abuse or perhaps they don't know how to

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disclose what happened. The advocacy center provides professional forensics interviewers skilled in establishing a rapport with a child in a safe area at the center – no police, no foster-parents, parents, etc. - no one but the interviewer and the child.

The process occurs in a very private, comfortable setting, where the interviewer frames discussion in such a fashion that allows the child to (hopefully) open up about what happened to them. There is a drawing board where they can draw or they can simply relax in a giant chair and talk. During the process, authorized third-parties can audit the interview from another room via closed-circuit television but only with the appropriate credentials that guarantee the privacy of the child and nondisclosure requirements in place.

The CASA, with their orders and court credentials, is one of the people that may be able to audit the process for their child, along with the DCS case manager; the parents are not. The forensic process is recorded and later is provided to law enforcement and DCS for use in their cases, records or for criminal pursuit. At the conclusion of the interview process, the children are allowed to decompress a little – watch TV, play a game, etc.; they are also given a treat if they would like one and a teddy bear.

Generally speaking, the process is effective enough that this may be the only interview the child has to endure; the key is getting that information to law enforcement and DCS so that the child can benefit from this type of forensics interview prior to multiple interviews by other agencies and/or authorities.

Although in Pima County, agencies in Cochise County may also leverage the resources available at the Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center. Their team is built upon a strong ethos of multi-disciplinary approaches and includes law enforcement, child protective services, prosecuting attorneys, medical and mental health professionals, and an educational function as well – all with a goal of supporting the child and reducing the victimization.

The ability of the CASA to participate in this process adds to the team and facilitates a greater understanding for the court of the professional support response that has been provided to the child-victim.

The center is a non-profit organization. For more information, visit <http://sacacenter.org/>.

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